

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9413

INFO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L K I R T O U M 0400

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AORG, ICRC

SUBJECT: ICRC OPERATIONS IN ETHIOPIA

REF: STATE 032550; GENEVA 0949; ADDIS ABABA 1763

1. AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED PROBLEM ICRC OPERATIONS IN ETHIOPIA FEB 18 WITH MONMIN USEC MUHAMMED MIRGHANI, AS PART GENERAL REVIEW RECENT ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS. AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED OUR INTEREST STEMMED FROM REQUIREMENT IN 1949 GENEVA CONVENTIONS THAT PARTIES ASSURE RESPECT FOR THEM IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND GAVE MIRGHANI COPY ARTICLES 1 AND 3 OF RELEVANT CONVENTION. MIRGHANI SAID THAT ICRC HAD ASKED GOS WHETHER SUDAN COULD HELP AND COULD EXTEND FACILITIES. HE HAD INTERPRETED THIS TO MEAN FACILITATING THE TRANSIT OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO ERITREA AND HAD INSTRUCTED GOS REPRESENTATIVE GENEVA INFORM ICRC THAT SUDAN WOULD BE GLAD BE OF SUCH ASSISTANCE PROVIDED PMAC FIRST CONCURRED. MIRGHANI ADDED THAT ERITREANS HAD ALSO APPROACHED SUDAN RE FACILITATIVE TRANSIT FOR ICRC AND SAID THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN IDENTICAL RESPONSE.

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2. AMBASSADOR REFERED CURRENT DIFFICULTIES ICRC

EXPERIENCING IN ASCERTAINING DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM IN ERITREA AND SAID HE BELIEVED ICRC HOPED NUMBER OF FRIENDLY COUNTRIES MIGHT APPROACH PMAC ON QUESTION OF FACILITATING ICRC ACTIVITIES PURSUANT TO 1949 GENEVA CONVENTION. MIRGHANI SAID ICRC HAD NOT ASKED SUDAN TO DO THIS BUT THAT GOS WOULD BE PREPARED APPROACH ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES IN ADDIS IF REQUESTED BY ICRC. HE COMMENTED THAT PMAC RESPONSE WOULD NO DOUBT DEPEND IN PART ON HOW APPROACH WAS CAST, NOTING THAT SUDAN HAD REJECTED INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS' REQUEST "TO INVESTIGATE DISCRIMINATION" IN SOUTH DURING SUDAN'S CIVIL WAR. MIRGHANI SUGGESTED APPROACH MIGHT BE COUCHED IN TERMS OF SEEKING ASSIST PMAC BY EXTENDING ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIANS OR OTHERS WHO MIGHT REQUIRE ICRC HELP IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROVISIONS 1949 CONVENTION. IF PMAC RESPONDED FAVORABLY, ICRC WOULD THEN HAVE OPPORTUNITY ASSESS SITUATION AND PLAN OPERATIONS WITHOUT DISTURBING ETHIOPIAN SENSITIVITIES.

3. COMMENT:
SINCE SUDANESE HAVE ALREADY UNDERTAKEN TO MEDIATE BETWEEN ETHIOPIANS AND ERITREANS, AND SINCE GOS IS APPARENTLY PREPARED TO APPROACH PMAC ON ICRC ISSUE, WE RECOMMEND THAT GENEVA BE AUTHORIZED SUGGEST TO DELEGATE GENERAL THAT, IN FIRST INSTANCE, ICRC ENLIST SUDAN'S SUPPORT AS LIKELY BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THAT OF SOME DISTANT STATE. THERE NO OBJECTION TO SHARING SUBSTANCE FOREGOING WITH ICRC PROVIDED THAT MIRGHANI'S IDENTITY CLEARLY PROTECTED.
BREWER

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